Rachel Levine

Rachel L. Levine (born October 28, 1957)[1][2] is an American pediatrician serving as the Pennsylvania Secretary of Health. She also serves as Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry at the Penn State College of Medicine. She was previously Pennsylvania's Physician General. She is one of only a handful of openly transgender government officials in the United States.[3] On January 19, 2021, United States President-elect Joe Biden announced that he is nominating Levine to be Assistant Secretary for Health, which would make her the first ever openly transgender federal official to be confirmed by the Senate.[4][5]

Contents

- Early life and education
- Career
  - COVID-19 pandemic
- Advocacy
- Personal life
- See also
- References
- External links

Early life and education

Levine is originally from Wakefield, Massachusetts.[6] She is Jewish and grew up attending Hebrew school, recalling that while she was growing up, her rabbi did not talk about LGBTQ issues.[7] She earned her high school diploma from Belmont Hill School in Belmont, Massachusetts.[8]

Levine graduated from Harvard College and the Tulane University School of Medicine and completed a residency in pediatrics and fellowship in adolescent medicine at the Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City, NY.[6]

Career

Rachel Levine

United States Assistant Secretary for Health	
Nominee	
Assuming office	TBD
President	Joe Biden (elect)
Succeeding	Brett Giroir
Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health	
Incumbent	
Assumed office	July 2017
Governor	Tom Wolf
Preceded by	Karen Murphy
Personal details	
Born	October 28, 1957 (age 63)
Spouse(s)	Martha Peaslee (div. 2013)
Children	2
Education	Harvard University (BS)

Tulane University (MD)

Levine had a fellowship at New York City's Mount Sinai Hospital from 1988 to 1993[6] where she trained in pediatrics.[9] After moving from Manhattan to central Pennsylvania in 1993,[6] she joined the staff at Penn State Hershey Medical Center. During her tenure there, she created Penn State Hershey Medical Center's adolescent medicine division and eating disorders clinic. She was in charge of the latter when she was nominated for the position of Pennsylvania Physician General in 2015.[6]

Rachel Levine, shown here in March 2020, graduated from Tulane University School of Medicine.

In 2015, Levine was nominated by Pennsylvania Governor-elect Tom Wolf to be Pennsylvania's Physician General.[3] In her capacity as Physician General, Levine signed an order that allowed law enforcement officers to carry the anti-overdose medication naloxone. She has credited the drug with saving the lives of almost 1,000 opioid users who had overdosed.[3] She served as Physician General until 2017.

In July 2017 Governor Wolf appointed Levine as Secretary of Health,[10] and she was unanimously confirmed.[3] In January 2021, United States President-elect Joe Biden announced that he is nominating Levine to be the Assistant Secretary for Health. If confirmed, she will be the first openly transgender federal official to be confirmed by the Senate.[4][5]

COVID-19 pandemic

As the state secretary of health, she leads the public health response on COVID-19 in Pennsylvania.[9] She works closely on a daily basis with the FEMA director and leads a daily press briefing.[10]

Levine briefing COVID-19 measures with Gov. Tom Wolf at the Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center in June 2020

Levine was accused of removing her own mother from a personal care home, after creating a policy whereby nursing homes throughout the Commonwealth would readmit residents testing positive for Coronavirus after they were declared healthy enough to leave the hospital. Levine has stated that personal care homes (as opposed to nursing homes) do not fall under the jurisdiction of her own agency.[11]

Advocacy

Levine has served as a board member of Equality Pennsylvania, an LGBT rights organization.[3]

Personal life

She has two children, David and Dayna.[12][13] She transitioned in 2011. Levine and her ex-wife, Martha Peaslee Levine,[14][13] divorced in 2013.[15][3]

See also

- List of transgender people

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External links

- Pennsylvania Secretary of Health profile (https://www.health.pa.gov/About/Pages/Leadership.aspx)

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